

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

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R 281839Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 759

INFO USUN 354

USCINCSO

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 MONTEVIDEO 0753/1

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, PINT, PINS, UY

SUBJECT: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS CONFERENCE ON URUGUAY

REFS: (A) USUN 0646 (NOTAL) (DTG 200047Z FEB 76), (B) OLSON-
BRAZEAL LTR DTD 29 JAN 76 (NOTAL), (C) MONTEVIDEO 241 (NOTAL),
(D) MONTEVIDEO 490 (NOTAL) (DTG 92234Z FEB 76), (E) 75 MON-
TEVIDEO A-9 (NOTAL), (F) MONTEVIDEO 0632 (NOTAL), (G) 75
MONTEVIDEO A-81 (NOTAL)

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED.

1. THIS MESSAGE IS INTENDED AS A COMMENT ONLY ON THE RAMSEY CLARK
STATEMENT FOR AI, AS REPORTED IN USUN 0646. WHILE WE WILL COMMENT
MORE FULLY ON AI'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST URUGUAY AS IT DEVELOPS, AND AS
FACTS MAY WARRANT, IT SEEMS TO US IMPORTANT TO BRING TO THE DE-
PARTMENT'S ATTENTION WHAT WE BELIEVE TO BE SOME SERIOUS INACCURA-
CIES IN THIS INITIAL STATEMENT, AND THE UNFAIR GENERAL IMPRESSION
IT GIVES OF THE OVERALL QUALITY OF LIFE IN URUGUAY TODAY.
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2. THE CHARGE THAT 22 PEOPLE DIED UNDER TORTURE FROM MAY 1972
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THROUGH NOVEMBER 1975 CANNOT BE CONFIRMED BY OUR BEST INFORMA-
TION, NOR CAN WE CONFIRM IN FACT THAT ALL OF THEM DIED. OUR

INFORMATION DOES INDICATE, HOWEVER, THAT THE MAJORITY OF THOSE NAMED DID DIE IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER; IN SOME CASES PROBABLY OR POSSIBLY DURING INTERROGATION, AND IN OTHERS MORE LIKELY IN CIRCUMSTANCES OF CONFLICT WITH AUTHORITIES. BECAUSE OF THE COMPLICATIONS OF THIS PARTICULAR ISSUE AND CONFLICTS BETWEEN OUR DATA AND THAT OF AI, WE ARE PROVIDING SUCH DETAIL AS WE HAVE ON EACH CASE BY SEPTEL. END SECRET.

3. BEGIN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE.

3. AI CHARGES THAT THERE ARE NEARLY 6,000 "POLITICAL PRISONERS" IN URUGUAY. IN OUR VIEW THIS IS A GROSS EXAGGERATION AS TO THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO MIGHT POSSIBLY MAKE UP AI'S FIGURE AND A DISTORTION AS TO THEIR DESCRIPTION AS "POLITICAL PRISONERS". SETTING ASIDE PEOPLE DETAINED UNDER ORDINARY CIVIL AND CRIMINAL LAW, THOSE REFERRED TO BY AI MUST BE PERSONS HELD AS TERRORISTS, SUBVERSIVES OR FOR OTHER "CRIMES AGAINST THE NATION". THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THESE, IN OUR VIEW, CANNOT BE VIEWED AS "POLITICAL PRISONERS". ON THE OTHER HAND, ONE MIGHT NEW MOST (BUT NOT ALL) OF THOSE TAKEN IN RECENT ROUNDUP OF PCU MEMBERS AS BEING POLITICAL PRISONERS.

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THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THE NUMBER OF PERSONS HELD BY THE GOU UNDER SECURITY LAWS TO HAVE BEEN CLOSE TO 3,000 PERSONS TWO YEARS AGO. THIS NUMBER, WE BELIEVE, HAD BEEN DROPPING SLOWLY BUT STEADILY EVER SINCE UNTIL THE RECENT ROUNDUP OF MEMBERS OF THE PCU RAISED THE NUMBER BEING HELD BY 150 AT FIRST, THEN ABOUT 300 LATER ON. WE BELIEVE THAT SOME 60 OF THESE 300 PCU PEOPLE HAVE SINCE BEEN RELEASED AND OTHERS ARE CONTINUING TO BE RELEASED (SEE REF B). HOWEVER, ARRESTS CONTINUE INCLUDING MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNIST YOUTH ORGANIZATION (UJC). END SECRET

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4. THE CHARGE THAT SINCE 1972 APPROXIMATELY ONE OUT OF EVERY 50 CITIZENS HAS SUFFERED INTERROGATION, TEMPORARY ARREST OR IMPRISONMENT SEEMS, ON THE BASIS OF RATIONAL JUDGMENT, TO BE HARDLY LIKELY OR EVEN POSSIBLE, EVEN THOUGH WE HAVE NO FIGURES TO DRAW ON. IF THE AI CHARGE WERE TRUE, IT WOULD MEAN THAT ABOUT 56,000 PEOPLE

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(OF A 2.8 MILLION POPULATION) SUFFERED SUCH TREATMENT SINCE 1972. WE DO NOT BELIEVE SUCH A NUMBER COULD HAVE BEEN SO PROCESSED.

5. IT IS PROBABLY TRUE THAT MANY PLACES OF DETENTION ARE "OVER-CROWDED" (REF B); THIS SEEMS LOGICAL IN VIEW OF THE RECENT ROUNDUP OF PCU MEMBERS AND HAS PUT A STRAIN ON EXISTING FACILITIES, PARTICULARLY THOSE FOR TEMPORARY DETENTION. AS FAR AS THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN ABLE TO DETERMINE, THERE HAS BEEN NO SERIOUS LACK OF "BASIC NECESSITIES" FOR DETAINEES, AND FAMILIES ARE GENERALLY PERMITTED TO FURNISH SOME NEEDS PERIODICALLY, SUCH AS

CLEAN CLOTHES, ETC. A1'S ORIGINAL SURVEY IN 1974, BASED ON PRISON VISITS, FOUND CONDITIONS GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE.

6. IF THE CHARGE THAT THE RIGHTS OF URUGUAYANS ARE TRAMPLED ON BY AN "OMNIPRESENT MILITARY JUDICIAL SYSTEM," IS INTENDED, AS IT SEEMS TO BE, TO CONVEY THE IMPRESSION THAT THIS IS A COERCIVE POLICE STATE, IT IS FALSE. URUGUAYANS ENJOY THE SAME BASIC LEGAL RIGHTS THEY ALWAYS HAD WHEN THEY ARE ACCUSED OF ORDINARY CRIMES WHICH ARE STILL TRIED IN CIVIL COURTS. THOSE URUGUAYANS WHO ARE ACCUSED OF TERRORISM, SUBVERSION AND OTHER "CRIMES AGAINST THE NATION" NOW FALL UNDER MILITARY JURISDICTION. BUT EVEN THIS DIRECTLY TOUCHES VERY FEW URUGUAYANS EVEN THOUGH IN A SMALL, INTERRELATED COUNTRY SUCH AS THIS THE INDIRECT IMPACT IS BROADER.

7. THE STATEMENT THAT TRADE UNION RIGHTS HAVE BEEN "TOTALLY SUPPRESSED" IN UNTRUE,. IT WOULD, HOWEVER, BE MORE ACCURATE TO SAY "PARTLY" SUPPRESSED. THE NATIONAL WORKERS CONVENTION (CNT), DOMINATED BY THE COMMUNIST PARTY, WAS DISSOLVED BY GOVERNMENT DECREE, AND INDIVIDUALS COMMUNIST-LED UNIONS ARE INDEED PROHIBITED, FOR THE MOST PART, FROM REPRESENTING THEIR MEMBERS. HOWEVER, SOME 40-50,000 WORKERS ARE REPRESENTED BY NON-COMMUNIST UNIONS WHICH, DEPENDING UPON THEIR TRADE UNION EXPERTISE, ARE ABLE TO FUNCTION WITHIN CERTAIN RESTRICTIONS. A FULL ACCOUNT OF TRADE UNION ACTIVITY IS CONTAINED IN REF G DATED JUNE 14, 1975 (ANNUAL LABOR REPORT).
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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

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R 281839Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 760

INFO USUN 355

USCINCSO

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 MONTEVIDEO 0753/2

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

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8. ALSO, WITH RESPECT TO TRADE UNIONISTS, THE ILO CONDUCTED AN ON-SITE INVESTIGATION BETWEEN JUNE 20 AND JULY 1, 1975 REGARDING CHARGES THAT TRADE UNIONISTS HAD BEEN UNJUSTLY DEPRIVED OF THEIR FREEDOM. IN A REPORT ISSUED BY THE ILO (GB.198/11/13 DATED NOVEMBER 1975 AT GENEVA), THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE UNION FREEDOM CONCLUDED: "THE AUTHORITIES HAVE DETAINED A GOOD NUMBER OF TRADE UNIONISTS (WHO LATER RECOVERED THEIR FREEDOM) FOR HAVING CARRIED OUT ACTIVITIES OF A TRADE UNION CHARACTER WHICH ARE PROHIBITED OR RESTRICTED IN URUGUAY. THESE DETENTIONS, FREQUENT IN 1973, HAVE DECLINED IN 1974 AND 1975 AND AT THE MOMENT OF THE VISIT OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL'S REPRESENTATIVE, NO LEADER OR ACTIVIST OF THE MAJORITY OF THE ORGANIZATIONS INTERVIEWED WAS FOUND TO BE DETAINED FOR UNION ACTIVITIES...VARIOUS UNIONISTS ARE AT THE DISPOSITION OF THE MILITARY JUSTICE ACCUSED OF BELONGING TO OR CONNECTED WITH SEDITIONARY ORGANIZATIONS OR OF HAVING DEDICATED THEMSELVES TO PROSCRIBED POLITICAL ACTIVITIES. THE PROCEEDINGS (ARE) SIMILAR TO ORDINARY PENAL PROCEEDINGS. THEY SEEM TO BE CHARACTERIZED BY THEIR SLOWNESS IN THE INVESTIGATIVE AND INSTRUCTIVE STAGES..."

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9. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT AI'S "CAREFULLY GATHERED AND AUTHORITATIVE MATERIALS" PROVE THE CHARGE THAT THERE IS "WIDESPREAD AND SYSTEMATIC USE OF TORTURE," OR THAT TORTURE AND MURDER ARE "OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED." WE BELIEVE THAT ABUSIVE EXCESSES AND PHYSICAL TORTURE WHEN IT OCCURS IS NOT CONSISTENT WITH GOU POLICY AND IS NOT KNOWINGLY SANCTIONED OR CONDONED BY THE HIGHEST GOU OFFICIALS. METHODS OF ARREST AND INTERROGATION, PLUS DELAY IN NOTIFICATION OF FAMILIES, ETC., DO, WE BELIEVE, CONSTITUTE PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE AND INSTILL FEAR WHICH IN SOME CASES MAY PRODUCE PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCES. THIS APPLIES, OF COURSE, TO SECURITY OPERATIONS ONLY, AS EXPLICIT CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS AND TRADITIONAL LEGAL GUARANTEES STILL REMAIN VALID AND OPERATIVE FOR THE VAST MAJORITY OF URUGUAYANS AND FOR CIVIL OFFENDERS.

10. ALTHOUGH THE RECENT DRIVE AGAINST MEMBERS OF THE PCU ASSOCIATED WITH ITS NEWLY DISCOVERED MILITARY APPARATUS HAS DOUBTLESS BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY AN INCREASE IN VIOLATIONS AS DESCRIBED, THE EMBASSY STILL BELIEVES THAT THE OVERALL TREND IN URUGUAY IS TOWARD IMPROVEMENT AS COMPARED WITH THE SITUATION SEVERAL YEARS AGO (SEE REF C). THUS, WE STRONGLY DIFFER WITH AI'S STATEMENT THAT "HORROR AND TERROR HAVE COME TO PERMEATE A NATION..." SUCH WORDS IN NO WAY JUSTLY PORTRAY THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN URUGUAY TODAY OR THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE VAST MAJORITY OF URUGUAYANS TOWARD THEIR

GOVERNMENT OR THEIR ATTITUDES TOWARD IT.
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